HELP NEAREST WHEN NEED GREATEST.

A SERMON

PREACHED IN

THE SYNOD OF OSCOTT,

ON SUNDAY, JULY 11th, 1852.

BY

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TO

THE FATHERS OF THE SYNOD OF OSCOTT,

AND TO THE CLERGY, REGULAR AND SECULAR,

THERE ASSISTING,

This Sermon

IS HUMBLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR FAITHFUL SERVANT IN CHRIST,

H. E. M.

Feast of S. Edward, King and Confessor,
1852.

A SERMON.

St. Mark viii. 13.

"I have compassion on the multitude; for, behold, they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat."

The miracle we have read in the Gospel of to-day sets before us a special manifestation of the watchful and tender pity of our divine Lord. God and Man Himself, He knew, both by divine intuition and by human experience, the burden of our infirmity. No suffering or sorrow was strange to Him. He had a sympathy and a consolation for all. His divine love was ever in motion through the affections of our nature to heal and strengthen. He too had tasted hunger in the desert: "When He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry." It was out of the fulness of His own personal knowledge that He said, "I have compassion on the multitude."

At the time when He spoke these words He

stood in the wilderness surrounded by the people who thronged upon His steps: "There was a great multitude" gathered from all around. While they saw His miracles and listened to His words they forgot themselves. Day by day they followed on, further and further from their homes. They were too eager in pursuit to remember either want of food or length of way. Some great desire for they knew not what drew them after Him; some craving mightier than hunger was upon them. "They have now been with Me three days"—how great their perseverance!—"and have nothing to eat:" and "some came from far:" distance no more than hunger or time turned them back. "If I send them away fasting to their home, they will faint by the way."

You know the rest: how the Lord blessed and gave the fishes and the loaves, and multiplied their substance. "They did eat and were filled: and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand." Their perseverance had its great reward. They had followed one who was almighty, and with Him they could lack nothing. God was with them in the wilderness: they pressed upon the Divine Presence, though they knew it not. The Omnipotence by which the world was made was with them; and in the hands of the Word made Flesh

the creatures multiplied even as they were created. "He spake the word, and it was done." The seven loaves had neither stint nor measure but the will and power of Him who blessed and brake them. Four thousand were filled, and seven baskets yet remained.

What have we here but the shadowing forth of some deeper mysteries? Though the scene lies in the common course of our Lord's earthly life, yet all His words and works are charged with a profounder meaning. The Son of Man in the wilderness, a fainting multitude, a miracle of compassion on their natural hunger,—this we see before us. But there are here greater things than these. The natural order passes into the supernatural, and the whole becomes a symbol and a parable of the Kingdom of Grace. Jesus, the disciples, and the multitude, set forth to us the new creation of God, the Head and the Body; the Church ministering and ministered unto; the whole continuous dispensation of Grace,—its fountain and its channels; its sacramental action, its manifold unity of elements, earthly and heavenly, human and divine.

This miracle, then, has many lessons for our instruction and encouragement.

First, it is a divine pledge to us that the compassion of the Son of God is ever upon His Church.

From the throne of His glory He watches over the multitude who still follow Him in the wilderness of this evil world. The whole Church throughout all the earth is before His gaze; and the sufferings and sorrows of every soul are present to His care. The Sacred Heart of Jesus has not withdrawn its compassion with His visible presence. It is enthroned at the right hand of God; but it is yet with us. "We have not an High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but was tempted in all things like as we are, without sin."[1] There is no depth of human trial which He has not tasted, no suffering in which He has not a share. "It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest before God, that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that wherein He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succour them also that are tempted."[2] The compassion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is ever present in every place. It flows throughout the Church. It has poured forth its divine tenderness through all successions of time. It is the fountain of all ministries of consolation in providence and in grace. It is with us from our regeneration; it dwells upon our

[1] Hebrews iv. 15. [2] Ibid. ii. 17, 18.

altars; it encompasses us as a pavilion, and is open to us as the tabernacle of God. He still stands in the midst, and says, "I have compassion on the multitude:" still, through the hands of His servants, He distributes corporal and spiritual mercy. What are holy sacraments but perpetual streams of grace, cleansing, absolving, strengthening, feeding the soul of man; a supernatural order which, by perpetual miracle, fulfils the type of the loaves in the wilderness? What are the manifold and inexhaustible ministries of charity, ever active through the company of His pastors, and through orders of religious consecrated to His service, but the perpetual distributions of His love? The disciples still dispense what the Lord blesses and bestows. The whole history of the Church is a realization of His compassion: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." "Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world." The Apostles went forth into all lands, as from their Master's side, to distribute the gifts of His mercy. A work of supernatural compassion multiplied in every city and nation of the earth. As the Sacred Heart of Jesus shed itself into the hearts of men, they in turn became the dispensers of mercy. As the Holy Ghost dwelling in the mystical body of the Son of God conformed

His members to their Head, the heathen world wondered to see a new and benign power rising up from within itself, of which its own consciousness could give no interpretation. Sorrow and suffering had no attraction for the delicate and refined, much less for the corrupt and selfish heart of man. The splendid and stately cities of the empire shone coldly upon the miseries of body and soul which dragged themselves along their streets. A plague breaks out in Alexandria. Neighbour and friend, kinsman and brother, wife and husband flee each other's touch. The dead and the dying are alike forsaken, or cast together on the pile. Horror, and a selfish agony to escape, hurry all natural affections away. In the midst of this tumultuous hardness of heart, who are these that move to and fro with as calm a mien and step as measured as if they ministered in some sacred rite? What is this tenderness of hand, this unwearied patience, this prodigality of self; what is this loving service of the dying, this reverent composing of the dead, but the compassion of the Son of God flowing into the members of His mystical body, and through them upon the suffering and sorrows of the world?

What filled the hard and selfish earth with apostles and pastors, with martyrs and confessors, with missionaries and evangelists of peace, with

messengers of unwearied charity, with servants of human suffering? As mankind has sorrowed, the Sacred Heart of Jesus has ever put forth its compassion. The particular suffering of each successive time brings forth some particular ministry of love. Every want and woe of man receives a special care. Every malady of body, as it arises in the dark succession of human sickness, calls forth some new provision of charity. Every malady of the soul is met by its consolation. The history of sorrow is the history of religious orders. The redemption of captives, the care of orphans, the fostering of outcast children, the feeding of the poor, the restoring of penitents, the sheltering of the innocent—each has its ministers. But time would fail to number up the channels and streams of inexhaustible compassion flowing from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The life of His saints is the transcript of His love. What are St. Francis and St. Dominic, St. Ignatius and St. Philip, St. Camillus and St. Vincent, but each one in his day the embodying and exercise of some part of the manifold compassion of their Master? They are the disciples of the Sacred Heart; the ministers of its sympathy and consolations. What, too, are the sons and daughters given them in multiplying succession to this hour, but the perpetual miracle of grace shadowed forth in the wilderness?

And further, as in this miracle, the omnipotence of Jesus, as well as His compassion, is ever present to His Church. Throughout the history of its rise, expansion, and perpetuity, wheresoever we turn, we see His almighty working.

What is the unity of the Catholic Church but a perpetual revelation of almighty power? For eighteen hundred years it has stood, the visible and continuous witness of Him who is one and undivided. "One Body, One Spirit, One Lord." The unity of the mystical body descends from above; as the seamless robe was "woven from the top throughout." It springs from the unity of the Person of its Divine Head, and in the midst of this discordant world, hangs from His almighty hand, a mystery and a miracle. May we not even say that the second creation is a higher revelation of omnipotence than the first? For the natural world arose into harmony and order out of passive unresisting matter. The Church has grown up into its unity and peace in the midst, and from the very substance, of discordant and conflicting wills. What but the harmonising power of omnipotence could first unite and then sustain in one this incoherent mass? They that believed were of one heart and of one mind, not in Jerusalem alone, but in every land; under every sky, of every race, and of every

tongue. Individual peculiarities passed away in likeness to one divine character; national discords were absorbed in one world-wide commonwealth. Nothing personal or local could resist the power which changed all into its own form, and held all in the bonds of a free spontaneous unity.

And this miracle of grace is not an event in the past, but a perpetual reality. Through eighteen centuries down to this day, through all changes of time and of the world, it still holds on. Men prophesy its end; but it never comes. They labour to divide it, but only cut themselves away. For this unity, like its divine life, is indestructible. The omnipotence of its divine Head is the source of its imperishableness. "Every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be plucked up." Empires and dynasties of man have come and gone, but the Church of God stands still. Schisms and heresies rise, flourish, and pass away. The unity of truth, as it saw their beginning, so it sees their end. It outwatches their brief existence; itself, as its Divine Lord, "yesterday and to-day and the same for ever." The new creation, as the old, rests upon omnipotence. The floods which have descended on the Christian world, sweeping before them the most enduring works of man and time; wars and invasions, barbarian hordes, the swarming

people of the north, the resistless tribes of east and south, have only borne before them the human elements, and laid bare the foundations of God, which are eternal. Asia and Europe have received and lost again and again endless forms of human order and human society; but the one Church has stood through all—still stands, unchanged, and indestructible.

And yet it is not more in the unity and the imperishableness of the Church, than in its perpetual and inexhaustible multiplication, that the omnipotence of its divine Head is unceasingly revealed.

The unity which sprang from the upper chamber expanded to the ends of the world. What was local became universal; ever extending, ever filling up its sphere, ever penetrating as the leaven in the meal, ever assimilating all things to itself. The whole moral and intellectual nature of man passed into its form and its possession; first individuals, one by one, then households, cities, nations and kingdoms, the rude and the refined, conquered and conqueror, the primitive and the degenerate in race, in civilisation, and in culture—all gave way, all gives way still before the Presence which is in the Church of God.

And this divine gift of fruitfulness by which the Church has multiplied itself in all the earth, and in

all ages since the ascension of its divine Head, is, if possible, still more wondrously revealed in the powers which it is ever putting forth to regain and to repossess itself once more of the soil and the site from which it has for a time departed. What changes and vicissitudes has not the Church endured! Our own land, for instance, once was heathen, then Christian, then heathen again, then Christian once more. Spain, first Christian, then Arian, then possessed by Mahomet, then Catholic again. Arianism for generations, almost for centuries, seemed to hold Lombardy as its own. The East revolted in mass from the Vicar of Christ, and now in every place it feels once more the jurisdiction against which it rebelled, and is penetrated on every side by confessors of Catholic unity. In the convulsions of Protestantism, whole nations seemed lost, which in a while were encompassed again within the divine kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The one Church universal has neither bound nor limit. It is not as the broken branch which, in the words of St. Augustine, "lies on its own place," maimed, local, and national. It interpenetrates again into all lands; it is present even in the heart of revolted kingdoms; it springs forth again, and overspreads once more with its exuberant life the soil which schism for a time lays bare.

And this leads us to another truth taught us by the miracle in the wilderness; namely, that not only is the compassion and the omnipotence of the Son of God always with His Church, but that, when season and time are ripe, He is ever near to interpose in its behalf. It was not on the first, nor on the second day, but on the third, that He fed the hungering multitude. He interferes, not when man's expectations demand, but when His own time is full. There seems to be a divine jealousy in the acts of His omnipotence. He alone can do them, and He will do them in such time and way as that all may know the event to be His work. He "loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it;" His own hand will work for it, and will not leave the issue of its trials in any other.

The whole career of the Church verifies this law. For what is it but a series of conflicts and victories, or straits and deliverances, of last extremities and almighty interpositions? The whole history of the Church is one endless struggle: heresy against truth; schism against unity; the world against God's kingdom. From age to age we see the finger of His special providence interposing at the last hour of need. When men have thought all hope gone; when all human help has been in vain, and all earthly foresight baffled, when looking on

each other they have said, "From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness?" then, and not till then, His destined time is come.

See how this has been verified in the history of heresies. Ebion and Cerinthus, Arius and Eutyches, Macedonius and Nestorius, the master spirit of perversity in every succeeding age, each in turn has risen and towered till he seemed to have none above him. The heresy of the day appears always to be on the point of prevailing; but yet always passes away. Heresies sprang up even while Apostles were on earth. St. Augustine numbers more than eighty already condemned before his time, and these only the chief among many more not numbered: by the fifth century heresies had obtained their historian. Sometimes they carried all before them: cities and nations, the court and the emperor, flocks with their pastors; they spread east and west, penetrating into every place except that one to which denial of faith has never come; they became lordly and dominant, learned and imposing, wealthy and in honour; they seemed to overshadow the earth, and to lift themselves to heaven. But where are they now? They must needs have time to reach their full stature before they fall, that their fall may be the more conspicuous; they must grow up into a head before the foot of the Son of God

will crush them. In every age, when the time was ripe, Peter spoke by Celestine and by Leo, by Innocent and by Gregory; and by Peter spoke the Divine Head, who gave to His Vicar upon earth the authority and power to speak. Heresy fell before the Word. Its name was clean put out, and its place knew it no more.

The same we see again in the history of schisms. How many fatal divisions seemed all but accomplished! Some threatened the very centre of the Church itself: for instance, in the great convulsions of the fifteenth century, when national pride struggled with Catholic unity. For seventy years the strife reached even to the See of Peter. The waves lifted up their voice, and the surges lashed the Rock; the end seemed come at last. When in His time the Divine Head put forth His hand; and there was a great calm. Four centuries of unbroken unity have succeeded.

And so, once more, what are the trials and straits through which the corruption of Christian kingdoms and the rebellion of the national will have made the Church to pass, but so many examples of the ever-watchful care of the Son of God—every peril a token of His presence, every hour of need a time of interposition? What is the last great Council which, after ages of peril to the faith and unity of Chris-

tendom, holding in Trent its sessions fearless and imperturbable amid schisms and storms, has stamped its ineffaceable decrees upon the Church throughout the world, but a token from on high of the omnipotent compassion which interposes to save when the hour to work is full?

When our divine Lord promised to the head whom He had chosen for His earthly kingdom, that the gates of hell should not prevail against it, did He not thereby prophesy that they should storm upon His Church? When He said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for *thee*, that *thy* faith fail not," did He not foretell the trial and the victory? And are they not perpetual both, the prophecy and the promise, fulfilled and fulfilling through all the course of the Church even to this day?

The world looks at the crisis, and proclaims the Church to be divided and the faith to be denied. The faithful look at the issue, in which the unity and infallibility of God and of His kingdom are revealed. They who are out of the unity of that divine tradition observe the momentary and outward perturbations as heathen gazed upon eclipses, believing nature to labour and the divine power to fail. They who are within the kingdom which is immov-

able behold as with a naked eye the law which orders and harmonises all. It is in these very anomalies, as at first they seem, that the changeless and divine laws of the Church are tested and confirmed.

Need I say what, at such a time as this, has drawn my thoughts this way?

1. Have we not here, and now before us, an example to be remembered in days to come of the compassion of our divine Lord upon the perseverance of faith? "They have now been with Me three days." Catholics of England, not three days, but three long ages you have followed on. Three hundred years of persecution, exile, and contempt have not turned you back. You are the offspring and the heirs of a perseverance which flows from no source lower than the power and compassion of the Son of God. If the stress of time and of the world—if will of man or malice of falsehood—if torture and bloodshed—if rack or sword could put out the light of faith, yours would be long extinct.

Commanded to speak to you, I cannot but obey. Obedience is my only help in a crowd of memories and thoughts which, at this time and in this place, would close my lips. In obeying, I speak not so much to you as of you—not as exhorting those of whom I am to learn, but as a witness of your faith.

Yet it is hardly for me to speak even of those heavenly gifts which we possess through you. There is perhaps but one matter on which with any fitness I may dwell, on which I may even claim to have a better knowledge. While you and your fathers suffered, how has it fared with those who smote you? How fare the posterity of those who laid hand on the Church of God? This at least we know too well, of which you happily know but little.

Let the religious history of England, Ireland, and Scotland give the answer. The same supremacy which fell so heavily on you, in the same century drove Scotland to rebellion. It forced the life-blood from the established Protestantism of England; it cast out in the century succeeding the best and devoutest of its remaining followers. Not more in schism from you than from each other, the sects of Protestantism have divided and subdivided till unity has no existence among their ideas of good. With schisms through three weary centuries came every form of error; and with error contradictions, doubts, and controversies; and now the minds of men seem to have lost perception and earnestness for truth as truth. Each claims his own view and is content. No matter who may err, or how deeply, so that each be free to choose. Not this or that doctrine of Christianity, but truth as such; truth as the light of the

intelligence, the food of the soul, has suffered this dishonour; not this or that article of the Creed, but the principle of faith, the divine foundation of belief, has been uprooted. The great wound of England is loss of faith in the divine reality of objective truth.

It is the head and the heart that have suffered. Indifferentism has stunted and impoverished both. When the Church ceased to teach, men began to opine. Opinion became the ultimate rule of faith. I am not speaking only of freethinkers and sceptics, whose light philosophy derides the belief that Revelation is an object definite and positive, spread before the reason as the firmament before the eye. Such speculators, indeed, know no truth but the veering shadows and states of their own mind. In them a carelessness for truth is no wonder, and less cause of fear. But there is a wound which has struck deeper into our people. It is the forfeiture of faith, even among the better and the truer; a disbelief in any divine tradition which alone has objective certainty; and therefore in the perpetual presence of a Teacher sent from God. In this land, so noble in all else, thousands wander benighted without a guide. They have been taught to believe that no such Teacher or tradition now exists; that God has not provided for man a certain knowledge of His truth. Many would acknowledge what I

say. They are at this hour seeking with perpetual anxiety, which wears and exhausts the heart, to know the mind of God in Jesus Christ. They would fain believe, not by historical inquiry and human criticism, not by conjecture or by guess, not by calculating probabilities, or on the certainty of their own mind alone, but upon some basis which, like the Truth itself, shall be divine. They once trusted that those who claim to be the pastors of this people could teach them truly; but in the midst of contradictions they have asked for guidance, and waited in vain for a response. When the faith, by confession of their very teachers, was openly denied, they looked up with inquiring gaze to the authority which they had believed to be divine. They asked in vain. In the hour of need there was no help in it. The authority in which they trusted failed, because it had no consciousness of divine commission. It could not speak for God, because it was not the organ of His voice. Transformed as it was to them, yet you would have told them that its nature was not then suddenly changed, but only at last revealed to their unwilling eyes. Slowly and painfully they yielded to the truth, that what they had believed to be divine was not a Church just then fallen from unity and faith, but a human society, sprung from private judgment,

established by civil power; human in its origin, human in its authority, and because human, without divine office or power from the first. The land once fair in their eyes became a wilderness; but Jesus still was there. He stood in the midst, and His disciples with Him, the same in pity and in love. Through you He distributes still the food of life. Through your perseverance, under God, the proposition of the Faith has been preserved to England. Without you the Church for us had ceased to speak, nay even to exist. It had been clean gone. You alone preserved the divine rule of Faith. Through all gainsaying and unbelief you and your forefathers have never ceased to teach, that as man has no knowledge of salvation through the grace of Jesus Christ except from the revelation of God, so he can have no certainty what that revelation is except by the Church of God; that as the Church of God, the Temple of His Presence, and organ of His living voice to man is one, visible and infallible, so that Church is no other than the Church which, having its circumference in all the world, and its centre in the See of Peter, unites us at this hour by a lineal and living consciousness of divine faith with the revelation of the day of Pentecost. Within this divine tradition alone is to be found the certainty and reality of Faith.

2. And lastly, as we have this day before us an example of perseverance, so also of the merciful and timely interposition of our Lord.

In three long ages of persecution, as your forefathers followed along the weary march of time, many indeed fainted by the way, many turned back; many who endured through persecution, failed when peace returned. What fear and terror could not do, smooth days accomplished. Some who would rather save their faith than life itself, at last gave faith away to be rich in gold, or to wear a bauble, or to sit with princes. The world was too sweet and strong. Is it not true that for more than two hundred years, from the time of the schism until this century, the Catholics of England were waxing continually fewer and weaker, while this people and empire were waxing mightier and stronger? They who escaped from persecution were scattered by civil war; and they who returned from their dispersion were crushed by despotic power. The Catholic Church in England saw its bishops dethroned, its priests slain, its altars rifled, its sanctuaries profaned, its cloisters violated, its universities occupied by error, its colleges and schools turned against the faith; it saw the whole culture of the intellect, and the whole discipline of the mind, matured by its own wisdom, and reared

by its self-sacrifice, wrenched from its hands. All this and more it has endured. Banished from political and social life, the prey of falsehood and injustice, scorned and impoverished, wasted and worn, generation after generation, what wonder if its numbers and relative weight declined? It was outcast in the land of its ancestry, and an alien to its mother's children.

But was it Protestantism that gained what faith lost? Far from it. Sin, worldliness, indifference, unbelief, practical atheism, all alike were gainers, but little else. As the Church grew weak in England, the powers of truth and right, the influences of the unseen world, were weakened too. So ran on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, till the Catholics of England wer enumbered only by thousands, all but absorbed in the mass in which they lay concealed.

Then was the crisis full, and the hour to work was come. The Lord came; He stood in the wilderness. Once more the creative power of grace passes from His hands, multiplying the little that remained; reproducing what was once destroyed, covering again with His presence the land so long wasted and bare; pastors and flocks, sanctuaries and altars, families of religious, men and women sacred to God and to charity, multiply around us:

a mission expands into a church; the whole form and structure in beauty and in majesty, old yet new, rises as from the earth. Wonderful visitation! though never absent, He seems to be nearer now. In what an hour and in what a land; in the centre of the mightiest empire of the world, before whose face and against whose will no Church formed by man can stand a day. What human society, what sect would dare to speak for the eternal truth before its princes, to stem its popular will, to confront the sovereignty of England? Mighty in itself, it is mighty in all its works, in its massive structure and its world-wide activity, and its unerring movements, like the mechanical forces of some vast engine, resistless in weight and complex in action; mighty too in its evils, in its teeming heresies, its multiplying schisms, in its worship of the world, in its prosperous unbelief. Three hundred years of religious strife and of worldly gain have done their work. Under a fair surface lies hardly hid a practical atheism and a corruption of moral life, of which they that should know most know least.

And not only what is worst, but much of the better also in this people is arrayed against the Church of God. Its very name they have been taught to hate. And why? Say what men will, for this reason above all, that the Catholic Church

alone will not cease to speak for God. Day and night it bears witness of the world unseen; it makes judgment near, and sin terrible. It will not hold its peace, nor unsay its message, nor leave its doctrines open, nor sanction contradictions, nor admit opinions on the faith, nor suspend its divine office to declare the truth, nor abdicate the sovereignty it has from God. It will do none of these things to be at peace with the world, and eat bread from the hand of man. Therefore the whole land rises against it. But through the rising storm the tokens of the Divine Presence also re-appear. He has re-entered upon His own. In the hour too when the work of Anglican reformation had been rehearsed before men's eyes, and the deeds of three centuries ago, contrary to the order and march of time, returned before the eyes of the living; so that they who will see may see; and seeing, both judge and act even now as they would have judged and acted then; in the moment of silence and suspense, when the Anglican communion was invoked to declare the faith, and against its will confessed that its inspiration was of the will of man, not of God; in that hour there fell a shadow upon England, and a presence more than human moved up against all earthly powers. He that wrought miracles in the wilderness put forth His hand to save. A supre-

macy higher than all, even His on whose head are many diadems, came and stood in the midst, imposing its divine jurisdiction upon the souls for whom He died, and commanding their return to the obedience of faith.

What, Fathers in Christ, what brings you here to-day but to legislate in His name? After three hundred years to build again what fear or force threw down; by a Divine power to undo what the sin of man accomplished. Another in the august line of Pontiffs has restored what a sainted predecessor gave, and bestows once more what England forfeited. The hierarchy of Gregory is reproduced in the hierarchy of Pius: a new order rises in its perfection. The Church of England in Synod takes up its work again after a silence of three hundred years. It re-opens its proceedings with a familiarity as prompt, and a readiness as calm, as if it resumed to-day the deliberation of last night. Though centuries of time have rolled away since it sat in council, the last Synod in England is but as the session of yesterday to the session of the morrow. Time is not with the Church of God, save as it works in time, and time for it. The prerogatives of the Church, like His from whom they spring, are changeless. You meet here as of old once more; you have no principles to seek, no theories to in-

vent, no precedents to discover; from the highest obligation to the lowest usage, all is definite and sure. After centuries, the Church puts forth its divine laws and powers, and applies them to the needs of place and time with the precision of a science and the facility of instinct. What is human stiffens and dies; the Living is ever in act as He in whose life the Church lives eternally.

And if we be faithful now as you of old, what a future is before us! All things bespeak a great hereafter. All around is laid upon a scale of vastness. The empire of Britain cannot be neutral in the earth. Its mass is too great to move this way or that without inclining the world as it sways. For good or for evil, it must leave its stamp upon the future. Under its shadow must spring up surpassing forms either of life or death. Penal colonies inexhaustible in evil, or Catholic races, cities, and states, must be it offspring. As the Greek and the Latin of old, so the Saxon blood and speech now are spread throughout the earth; a prelude, now as then, of some profound design of God. Already the Saxon, with his kindred races from our shores, encompasses the world. They are flowing together; they are meeting in new regions of the earth; ever moving on, westward from the Atlantic, eastward from the Indian Seas. The earth is

girdled about with our race, bearing forth with them the institutions, traditions, and customs,—the nerve, the intelligence, the endurance, the will of England. They are laying deep and wide the base of civilisation, of empires yet to come. Not without purposes in heaven is all this accomplishing. Do we not even now already perceive its issue? Even now already the Catholic Church holds the widest possession of this mighty frame. It is penetrating on every side with all its power of life and of futurity. The See of St. Peter is present in all the colonies of England; the unity of the Catholic Episcopate binds them all in one; the Priesthood already lifts the one Sacrifice in every land; orders consecrated to God have their home in every clime: what are all these but germs of the future, fruitful principles, and productive centres of unity and truth? Nothing shall be lacking in the hour of need; for the Multiplier is there. All things do Him service; even those that resist Him, in resistance do His will. For three hundred years the empire of old Rome strove to put out the Truth; for three hundred years, in every city and province of its mighty sway, the prætor and the lictor, the axes and the rods, wreaked their worst upon the Faith. For three hundred years all the conscious influence of Rome was bent in one aim to destroy the Church of God,

but all the while its unconscious influence, even without its knowledge and against its will, wrought for the Name of Jesus. It confirmed His kingdom upon earth. Through all the Church still stood, expanding in calmness and in power, moulding to itself the framework and the substance of the empire. It had united all nations, that the Church might penetrate mankind; it had proclaimed silence in the earth, that the infallible voice might be heard; its fleets and armies opened land and sea for the passage of evangelists; its roads and commerce laid the world together; its laws protected the faithful, its cities were Apostles' thrones. So shall it be again. Let us fear nothing but mistrust. We need but faith, and faith too is a gift of God. He is with us in His compassion and His omnipotence. The Lord is come into our wilderness, and the hour to interpose is nigh. Though the line of St. Augustine be broken, and his See without a name; though the saints of our Saxon land seem left without offspring or inheritance, St. Alban and St. Bede, St. Edmund and St. Thomas, shall yet have sons as princes in all lands. "The land that was desert and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice and shall flourish like the lily. It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise; the glory of Libanus is given to it;

the beauty of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord and the beauty of our God. Strengthen ye the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees. Say to the faint-hearted: Take courage and fear not: behold your God will bring the revenge of recompense; God Himself will come and save you."[1]

[1] Isaias xxxv. 1-4.

THE END.

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